



Steven Farnham

A life-long Vermonter, I was raised, and reside in Plainfield, on a family farm built the same year the first session of the United States Senate opened to the public. I'm a member of a half dozen co-ops—member of Hunger Mountain Co-op about thirty years. I've served on the boards of Plainfield's Cutler Library and the Vermont Philharmonic, as well as on Plainfield's planning commission and as justice of the peace. I am currently serving on the Board of Washington Electric Cooperative. My education and job experiences are in electronics, engineering and manufacturing, plus I have some education in business. I've attended dozens of conferences, including Arbour Day, CCMA, FEMC, NEAEC NFCA, Northeast Grazing and Livestock, NOFA-VT, REV, and VECAN. I enjoy writing, amateur radio broadcasting, property management, problem-solving, and public engagement.

The cooperative model provides goods and services to the community in an environmentally and socially benevolent manner and is responsive to the people served, rather than the corporate model, which tends to serve and benefit an elite minority with minimal accountability to environmental, social, and broader community interests. While the co-op serves the community in many small ways, its most obvious main function is that of a “co-operatively owned grocery store.”

I would like to explore ways in which the Co-op might be able to expand its service to the community. Could the Co-op operate a “food truck” in distant, underserved communities? Could cooperating better with surrounding smaller co-ops improve the offerings of all involved? Could the Co-op offer other services, such as auto maintenance and a gas station/quick-stop, as is the case with the Hanover Co-op? Could the Co-op play a role in local affordable housing? Could the Co-op join with other co-ops to leverage buying power for better or lower-cost employee health insurance as is done among electric co-ops? Any way the Co-op can better serve its members is of interest to me.

I would bring the following strengths and skills to the council:

- Innovative problem-solving
- Ability to find common ground between opposing perspectives
- Thirty years' community service on the Council, other boards, and in local town government
- Knowledge of Co-op Bylaws, Council Policies Roberts Rules, Policy Governance
- Familiar with confidentiality requirements
- Familiar with history of Hunger Mountain Co-op governance (institutional memory)
- Familiar with NVC (Nonviolent Communication)

As stated above, the Co-op operates in an environmentally and socially benevolent manner, responsive to the community served. When trust in those in governance is compromised, as has been the case at the Co-op in past months, actions and messaging come under close scrutiny and/or skepticism. Trust, confidence, and “consent of the governed” need to be robust.

If elected, I will advocate for greater transparency and less cumbersome communication among stakeholders. I will advocate for more inclusion of the Staff Representative in council activity. As in the past, I will listen to members and staff and bring their concerns to the council.

Outside of the Co-op, without question, the most urgent and pressing challenge is climate destruction. For close to 100 years, food distribution in this country has hewed toward the “box store” model. Is there a less environmentally destructive way to deliver goods to the end user that does not involve everyone driving to one massive central location?

Should the Co-op implement a different method of meeting its members' needs? Should the Co-op search for and investigate less environmentally destructive ways to meet its members' needs? The answer to the second question is absolutely yes.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Hunger Mountain Co-op. I will focus on more transparent accountability, greater sustainability, carbon footprint reduction, and greater dynamism and diversity in how the co-op serves the community. I will continue to listen to Hunger Mountain Co-op members and workers, to know their needs, concerns, and goals. I appreciate your support.

Candidate Education Checklist: Candidates received up to five apples for each council-related educational item completed.

